

inability, apparent inability of this House and this leadership to address the issues that are of utmost concern to the American people.

We take an oath, Mr. Speaker, as you know, that says that we will work to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. One of the ways that we do that is to make certain that the individuals who are gaining information on our behalf from folks across the world who wish to do us harm, that we get that information, that we're working with as much information as possible, that we, as a Nation, know what the bad guys are going to do before they do it. When we don't, what happens is days like 9/11.

And so, Mr. Speaker, shortly after 9/11 there were some laws that were passed that updated our intelligence capability, that made it so that our intelligence officers across the world would be able to track and listen to and discover electronic communication, verbal and otherwise, when terrorists outside of the United States were talking to other terrorists outside of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I represent the Sixth District of Georgia, just outside of Atlanta. When I ask folks at home does anybody think that's not a good idea, should we be able to listen to terrorists outside of our country when they talk to other terrorists outside of our country, and they might be talking about plans to bring many of us great harm, should we be able to listen if we had the technological capability to do so, I haven't met anybody yet, not one person yet who thought that was a bad idea.

This is not the Federal Government wiretapping, surveilling, listening in on conversations between you and me. This is not the issue. The issue is not whether or not the laws ought to be changed to determine whether or not our intelligence officers can listen to American citizens talking to American citizens on American soil.

No, Mr. Speaker, this issue is the ability of our intelligence officers to listen to terrorists or suspected terrorists outside the United States who are talking or communicating with others of like mind outside the United States. Should we be able to do that?

Mr. Speaker, the Senate thinks we ought to be able to do that, by a bipartisan majority, 68-29. Up until this leadership, the House thought we ought to be able to do that. The American people think we ought to be able to do that.

But the problem now, Mr. Speaker, is this leadership in the House of Representatives who has allowed this law to expire. This leadership has made it so that the American people are suffering from an American Government that has brought about a unilateral, unilateral disarmament when it comes to determining what terrorists are doing, plotting to do us great harm. That's not my opinion. That's a fact. That's a fact.

I'll give you some other facts here, Mr. Speaker. What has happened in the past week, since I last took this well and spoke about this issue is that a letter was sent out from a bipartisan group of 25 State Attorneys General talking about this FISA bill. I will submit this letter for insertion into the RECORD.

MARCH 4, 2008.

Re FISA Amendments Act of 2007 (S. 2248)

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House,
Washington, DC.

Hon. STENY HOYER,
Majority Leader,
Washington, DC.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Minority Leader,
Washington, DC.

Hon. ROY BLUNT,
Minority Whip,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER PELOSI, MAJORITY LEADER HOYER, MINORITY LEADER BOEHNER AND MINORITY WHIP BLUNT: We urge the House of Representatives to schedule a vote and pass S. 2248, the FISA Amendments Act of 2007. This bipartisan legislation is critical to the national security of the United States. Once passed, S. 2248 will ensure intelligence officials have the ability to collect vitally important information about foreign terrorists operating overseas.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman John D. Rockefeller (D-WV) authored S. 2248 to solve a critical problem that arose when the Protect America Act was allowed to lapse on February 16, 2008. The root of the problem stems from a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act ("FISA") Court order that jeopardizes America's national security efforts. Under that decision, U.S. intelligence agencies must obtain a FISA warrant before initiating surveillance involving suspected foreign terrorists located outside the United States.

The FISA Court's decision hinged on the fact that those entirely foreign communications are frequently routed through telecommunications facilities that happen to be located in the United States. Because modern global communications networks routinely route data through numerous facilities in a myriad of countries, the nation in which the call originates may be completely unrelated to the nation through which that call is ultimately routed.

A bipartisan majority of the United States Senate recently approved S. 2248. But until it is also passed by the House of Representatives, intelligence officials must obtain FISA warrants every time they attempt to monitor suspected terrorists in overseas countries. Passing S. 2248 would ensure our intelligence experts are once again able to conduct real-time surveillance. As you know, prompt access to intelligence data is critical to the ongoing safety and security of our nation.

As Attorneys General, we are our states' chief law enforcement officials and therefore responsible for taking whatever action is necessary to keep our citizens safe. With S. 2248 still pending in the House of Representatives, our national security is in jeopardy. We therefore urge the House of Representatives to schedule a vote and pass the FISA Amendments Act of 2007.

Sincerely,

Attorney General Greg Abbott (R-TX),
Attorney General Kelly Ayotte (R-NH),
Attorney General Thurbert Baker (D-GA),
Attorney General Jon Bruning (R-NE),
Attorney General Steve Carter (R-IN),
Attorney General Talis Colberg

(R-AL), Attorney General Roy Cooper (D-NC), Attorney General Tom Corbett (R-PA), Attorney General Mike Cox (R-MI), Attorney General W.A. Drew Edmondson (D-OK), Attorney General Doug Gansler (D-MD), Attorney General Troy King (R-MI), Attorney General Larry Long (R-SD), Attorney General Patrick Lynch (D-RI), Attorney General Bill McCollum (R-FL), Attorney General Dustin McDaniel (D-AR), Attorney General Bob McDonnell (R-VA), Attorney General Darrell McGraw (D-WV), Attorney General Rob McKenna (R-WA), Attorney General Henry McMaster (R-SC), Attorney General Mark Shurtleff (R-UT), Attorney General Stephen Six (D-KS), Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem (R-ND), Attorney General John Suthers (R-CO), Attorney General Lawrence Wasden (R-ID).

This letter is dated March 4, 2008, and I'm going to read the majority of it because I think it's incredibly important for you, Mr. Speaker, and the American people to appreciate the gravity of this situation. Again, this is from a group of bipartisan Attorneys General from across the United States.

And what they say is: "We urge the House of Representatives to schedule a vote." Again, that's all we're asking for is a vote. "To schedule a vote and pass Senate bill 2248, the FISA Amendments Act of 2007. This bipartisan legislation is critical to the national security of the United States. Once passed, S. 2248 will ensure intelligence officials have the ability to collect vitally important information about foreign terrorists operating overseas."

Mr. Speaker, foreign terrorists operating overseas. State Attorneys General understand it's not talking about changing U.S. law to surveil or listen in upon conversations between American citizens.

Going on in the letter, "Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER authored S. 2248 to solve a critical problem that arose when the Protect America Act was allowed to lapse on February 16, 2008."

That's the law, Mr. Speaker, that was allowed to expire because this current left liberal majority, left liberal leadership who runs this House refuses to allow a vote on this bill.

The letter goes on. "The root of the problem stems from a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Court order that jeopardizes America's national security efforts. Under that decision, U.S. intelligence agencies must obtain a FISA warrant before initiating surveillance in following suspected foreign terrorists located outside the United States."

And, Mr. Speaker, some people say, What's wrong with that? What's wrong with going to court to see if it's okay to listen in to these folks?

Mr. Speaker, you know and I know that the manner of communication since 1978 when this bill, when the initial FISA bill was adopted, the manner of communication across this world has changed. We now have e-mails. We've got BlackBerries and blueberries